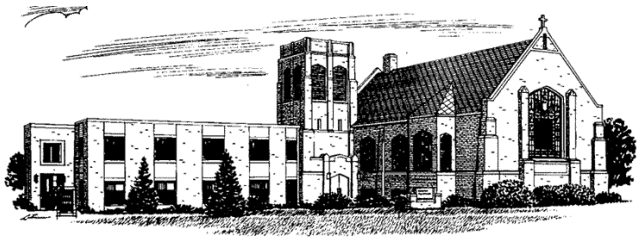

SARON NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:
www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: *oleson@saronlutheran.org*

Marcus Roll, Senior Choir Director,
Bell Choir Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com
Irma Gorman, Organist
Margaret Froehlich, Administrative
Assistant
Megan Savage, Financial Secretary
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org
Emily Gaul, Child Care

Typical Sunday Schedule at Saron:
During the School Year:
8:30 & 11:00 A.M. Worship
Childcare provided
9:40 Learning for Ages 2 – Adult

Summers (thru Labor Day weekend):
9:30 Holy Communion
Childcare provided
No Learning Hour

During the present Pandemic:
11:00 a.m. via Zoom

All are welcome!

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia

Saron's Mission:
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!

November 2020

We may not be singing aloud together these days, but songs of gratitude ring through my heart. By just reading through this newsletter, one can realize how many folks are doing so many things, even during the pandemic and outside the building. Thank you. I have deep gratitude for Saron's leaders as they discern monthly whether we go back into the building. As of now, the decision is to delay that return for the time being, as numbers in the area and the state have been rising. In the meantime, behind the scene preparations continue so that we are ready when the time is right.

You have read and heard about the work of Saron's Inclusivity Task Force to help discern whether Saron will become a Reconciling in Christ congregation. That work was put on pause when the pandemic began, but we are now back in full swing. Please see the article in this newsletter that explains more as we invite you to join in conversations via Zoom beginning November 8. Thank you, Task Force, for all your efforts.

On November 24, we will hold our Thanksgiving worship via Zoom. The singing may not happen as usual, but our hearts are full of all that God has done and continues to do in our lives. So, my thanks extend far beyond what we do, but for who we are, as God's beloved children.

Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices, who wonderous things has done, in whom this world rejoices…. (ELW 840)

Pastor Joan

Caring and Sharing

In Our Prayers –

Arla Huelsberg and Richard Schalon are at the Whitcomb Tower Retirement Center, St. Joseph; **Bernice Koski** is at Woodland Terrace.

Office Hours at Saron (these hours will vary during Covid-19)

Margaret (secretary): Mon-Tues, 9 AM - 1 PM
Weds of Newsletter Week, 9 AM - 1 PM
Volunteers: Weds, 9:15 AM - 11 AM (approximately)
Megan Savage(financial secy); Tues & Thurs 5:30 PM
financial@saronlutheran.org

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (983.1273) or contacting the president of the congregation.

Note: E-mails meant for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org. E-mails to Margaret and the church office should be addressed to info@saronlutheran.org.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members in November 2020.

Nov. 4 - Laurel Gacek
7 - Meredith Gacek
13 - Carter Hohman
15 - Coanne Hohman
19 - Brent Dipert
20 - Christopher Gilmore Gaspari
22 – Laraine Taylor
23 - Ruth Ball
25 - David Lundgren
27 - Gene Embree
28 - Melanie McCammon
30 - Denise Cook

Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members in November 2020.

Nov. 1 - Ryan and Kelli Christman
7 - Michael and Laura Chaddock
21 - Mark and Deborah Vollmer
22 - Walter and Sally Schmuhl
John and Kerrie Hoodlebrink

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round"
Please notify the church offices of any updates to this list.

PRAYER GROUP

Please call or email Pastor Joan with your prayer requests at oleson@saronlutheran.org. Thank you.

With Sympathy

We offer our sympathy to the family of Gerald Heppler upon his death October 7. A family funeral was held at Stark's on 10/14/2020.

God is our refuge and strength. Psalm 46:1a

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Laura Brunner and Andrew Danielsky, as well as grandparents, Ed and Mary Alice Brunner upon the birth of Freyja Mari Danielsky, born October 16. Welcome, Freyja!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

On October 25, we received new members into Saron's faith community. We welcome Merrily Smith from Grace Lutheran, River Forest, IL; and Aaron and Katherine Davis, Berkeley and Willow from Peace, St. Joseph. Welcome and God's blessings to each of you.

Fatigue is a word we've been hearing a lot lately. COVID fatigue, technology fatigue, fundraiser fatigue...

There is this idea that we can only take so much of one thing before we hit some sort of wall. It simply isn't true. With God and each other giving us strength, we have endless capacity for whatever comes our way and for however long it stays. Every single day is an opportunity to make fresh choices. Today, we choose again to keep fighting, keep connecting, and keep giving.

As of the end of September 2020, we had collected $275,766 towards our 3 year pledge total of $371,165. Thank you for continuing to choose Saron. We choose you right back!

Worship

FACEBOOK

We love to share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page and we get great feedback. It is our practice not to put names with the pictures. If you have questions, or prefer your picture not to appear, please contact Pastor.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

Sunday Nov. 1 –
All Saints Sunday
Revelation 7:9-17
Psalm 34:1-10, 22
1 John 3:1-3
Matthew 5:1-12

Sunday Nov. 8 –
Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost
Amos 5:18-24
Psalm 70
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Matthew 25:1-13

Sunday Nov. 15–
Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18
Psalm 90:1-12
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
Matthew 25:14-30

Sunday Nov. 22 –
Christ the King Sunday
Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24
Psalm 95:1-7a (7)
Ephesians 1:15-23
Matthew 25:31-46

Sunday Nov. 29 -
First Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 64:1-9
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:24-37

Youth

Are you in grades 6-12? Please join us for youth group activities! For more info, contact Scott at *scottgaspari@outlook.com or (Cell) 847-373-8825.*

LEARNING

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

Tuesday Evening Men's Bible Study

We are doing our study online at 6:00pm on Tuesdays with the use of "Zoom." Each week, I will send out an "invitation" to you showing the link to the study. The invitation will also include the lessons that will be studied. If you are not sure if I have your email, please send it to me (Bob) so that I can send you the link and information.

For more information call Bob Kynast at 269-921-2786 or bobkynast@gmail.com or Don Hafer at 269-985-3637 or hafer.don@gmail.com. All men are invited to join us. As the Bible says "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17).

1ST SUNDAY BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

November 1st, 6:30 p.m., we will meet again to discuss "Educated", by Tara Westover. In her gripping and at times unbelievable memoir, Westover tells about being raised by survivalists, being seventeen the first time she set foot in a classroom and how she managed to earn a PhD from Cambridge University. It is a story about family loyalty, grief, what the heart of education is and the will to change one's life no matter how difficult it becomes. It is a wildly popular book generating plenty of opinions. Join us as we share our many different opinions.

Moving to December 6th, our choice is "The Guest Book" by Sarah Blake. The Milton family history is "a saga that illuminates the great divide and the gulf that separates the rich and poor, black and white, Protestant and Jew spanning three generations." (taken from book jacket) There is more here than you might expect. Lots to ponder and discuss pertaining to our times today.

The November 1st meeting will be by ZOOM. Sign-on information will be emailed to all of you who have expressed interest in this group. If you love to read and talk about books, please join us. Contact Kathy Cowall (269) 428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com if you want to be included on the email list to receive the ZOOM information. All are welcome!

"You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them". (Ray Bradbury)

THURSDAY MORNING WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

This study group meets virtually from 9:30-11:00 a.m. via Zoom on Thursday mornings. Contact Pastor for Zoom information. New folks are always welcome!

Men's monthly Bible Devotions and Breakfast

We will meet via Zoom at 9 a.m. on Saturday, November 7. Contact Dennis Lundgren for more information or watch Your e-mail for details.

Women of the ELCA.

SARON CHURCH WOMEN

Saron Church Women will meet on Wednesday, November 11, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. for the Annual Meeting by way of Zoom. Business matters will be discussed and voted upon. Zoom information will be emailed before the meeting. Alll women of Saron are welcome to attend.

LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF FOLLOW-UP

Saron Church Women thanks everyone who contributed to our Lutheran World Relief project. Rather than collecting items for personal care kits and fabric kits, we asked for monetary donations to the LWR Quilt and Kits Shipping Fund. That amount totaled $430.00. Thank you very much for your generosity. It's greatly appreciated and will be put to good use by LWR.

Hospitality

Watch for more news as we get closer to getting back together in the building.

Outreach

BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN

On August 27th, with a lot of precautions, Mary & Bob Kynast, Darlene Kiessel , & Kathie Bradley packed sack lunches for 120 people to be distributed at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen.

This has become the new "norm" this summer for lunches instead of the ham dinner that we previously prepared and served in the dining room. On the 4th Thursday of the month we prepare a sack lunch which includes a turkey sandwich, chips, an apple, dessert and water. Soup Kitchen employees then serve the meal to guests outside the building.

If you feel comfortable helping prepare the lunch please contact Kathie Bradley (269-921-4665]. At this time we are not provided cookies for the lunches. During this pandemic it is even more important to continue Saron's mission of *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!*

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, & prayers.

After the church building opens **large cans of fruit will be needed at the Soup Kitchen** & can be dropped off anytime at the church. Any questions or to volunteer or provide cookies at a later date please contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

You are invited to be part of the conversations that help in the discernment of becoming a more intentionally inclusive community of faith. On November 8, at 10 a.m., we again start the conversation about the possibility of becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation. What does that mean? What is the process? What does it mean for our welcome of all people, as our mission statement proclaims?

Here is Saron's proposed Welcome Statement, as affirmed by the council. It will begin our discussion. "As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all,* we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome."

Watch for more information in a separate email (or US mail, if you do not receive email) which will be sent out early the week of November 1.

DID YOU KNOW?

Some things are happening at Saron that some of us haven't heard about – because of COVID, so much doesn't get communicated through our normal channels – including our usual chit chat after worship. So here's a couple of things that took place recently.

Sometime during the summer, members of the Education Committee made up gift packages for our young people who normally attend Vacation Bible School. The packages contained 5 days worth of activities and crafts such as the children would have done in person at VBS. Plus, the boxes reminded the kids that we are always thinking of them. Committee members delivered the boxes to the childrens' homes. We appreciate the Education Committee for this creative response to a summer of isolation, and those members of the Committee who put it all together and delivered the boxes.

In October, another group of volunteers delivered care packages to all of the Saron members (that we knew about – hope we found everybody we found 34 of them) who are health care workers, educators, and church staff. We all know these three groups of people have been working under very stressful conditions as they learn new ways for doing their jobs, staying safe, and keeping those they take care of stay safe while receiving treatment or learning or worshiping in a very different environment. A big thank you to all those people on the front lines, and a big thank you to the package preparers and deliverers. Contents for the gift bags were purchased with a Thrivent Action Grant.

Support

Tax Incentives during the Covid-19 Pandemic

"Above-the-line" tax deduction for charitable contributions

The federal government recently passed legislation to provide financial relief to families as a result of Covid-19. As part of the CARES Act, for the purpose of increasing the work of charitable organizations, individual taxpayers will receive new tax incentives for making charitable donations. The provision encourages individuals to contribute to religious, charitable, and educational organizations by creating a new "above-the-line" deduction (i.e. for taxpayers who take the standard deduction). This deduction permits deduction of up to $300 of annual monetary contributions.

This is applicable for tax years beginning after 2019, and does not sunset after 2020.

A related provision increases the limitations on deductions for charitable contributions by individuals who do itemize. For those individuals, the 50% of adjusted gross income limitation is suspended for cash contributions made in 2020.

For members over 72 years old drawing income from an IRA, the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) is waived for 2020, thereby reducing your tax burden. Effective January 1, 2020, the CARES Act waived RMDs for defined contribution 401(k) plans, 403(b) plans, governmental 457(b) plans, and IRAs for calendar year 2020. The waiver applies to RMDs to be made in 2020 and to 2019 RMDs that were due by April 1, 2020 (if not already made in 2019). The good news is that Qualified Charitable Distributions can still be made directly from an IRA account to the church that will both benefit our ministry and reduce the member's taxable income.

As always, members are advised to check with their tax advisor for the latest information and interpretations before filing.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey to receive more information. Thanks! Joe Ulrey josephulrey@yahoo.com

ELCA GOOD GIFTS

Goats and piglets and chicks, oh my!

At this time in past years, we're accustomed to seeing the little Christmas tree in the Narthex decorated with colorful ornaments depicting farm animals that are so vital to the survival of families around the globe. Unfortunately, this year we won't be in the Narthex at the beginning of Advent, but we can still support ELCA Good Gifts. Your donation for an ornament allows the ELCA to purchase and deliver the animal of your choice to where it will do the most good. To keep it simple this year, we are offering a choice of only four animal ornaments.

Goat – $50
Goats can go where other animals can't, surviving in some of the world's most challenging terrain. Goat's milk provides nutrition for children and goats are quick to reproduce.

Piglet – $30
This little piggy couldn't be a bigger lifesaver. This gift provides natural fertilizer that helps crops grow tall and strong.

Honeybees – $20
Support farmers and healthy honeybee colonies with this buzz-worthy gift. Honeybees provide honey to eat, beeswax that allows a farmer to start a small business, and a boost to crop growth by pollinating plants everywhere they go.

Chicks – $10
Help a family spread their wings. Eggs not only provide an ongoing supply of protein-rich meals – they can also help start a small business and generate a steady source of income.

Here's how it will work this year:

- Look for an order form in the bulletin each week during Advent.
- Fill out the order form and return it, along with your payment, by mailing to the church or dropping in the office mail slot.
- We will send you your ornament(s) by return mail, or if you are in a rush to get it (them), we can probably drop it (them) off at your house.
- Once all the Good Gifts donations are collected, we will send them to ELCA and your animals will be on their way to a new home!

As members of the ELCA, we believe that God is calling us into the world – together. And with generous, loving hands, we can make a difference. ELCA Good Gifts is your opportunity to provide critical support to the ministries and programs that mean the most to you and the people you love. – Saron Outreach

A STEWARD'S PRAYER

Dear Jesus,
Help me to understand that my parish is composed of people like me. I help make it what it is.
It will be friendly, if I am.
It will be holy, if I am.
Its pews will be filled, if I help fill them.
It will do great work, if I work.
It will be prayerful, if I pray.
It will make generous gifts to many causes, if I am a generous giver.
It will bring others into worship, if I invite and bring them in.
It will be a place of loyalty and love, of fearlessness and faith, of compassion, charity, and mercy, if I, who help make it what it is, am filled with these same things.
Therefore, I beg you, Jesus, for the grace I need to dedicate myself to the task of being all the things that I want my parish to be.
Amen.

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email:info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

November 2020

Interfaith Action
SW Michigan Peace & Justice Collaborative

Saron is involved in this collaborative on multiple levels. Find out more at https://swmichinterfaith.org/ or by liking their webpage at https://www.facebook.com/swmichinterfaithaction.

Thanksgiving Worship
Tuesday, November 24 at 7 pm
via Zoom

November 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Daylight Saving Time Ends All Saints Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30 Via Zoom Sunday School 10:10 via Zoom 6:30 p.m. 1St Sunday Book Group Via Zoom	**2** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes)	**3** Election Day 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study. Via Zoom	**4** 11:00a.m. Virtual Coffee Via Zoom	**5** 9:30 a.m. Bible Study Via Zoom	**6**	**7** 9:00 a.m. Men's Devotional will be held by Via Zoom
8 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30 RiC Conversation 10 a.m. via Zoom	**9** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes) 6:00 p.m. Support Comm. Via Zoom Newsletter Articles due	**10** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study. Via Zoom	**11** Veterans Day 11:00a.m. Virtual Coffee Via Zoom	**12** 9:30 a.m. Bible Study Via Zoom	**13**	**14**
15 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30 RiC Conversation 10 a.m. via Zoom	**16** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes) 7:00 p.m. Church Council Meeting by Via Zoom	**17** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study. Via Zoom	**18** 11:00a.m. Virtual Coffee Via Zoom	**19** 9:30 a.m. Bible Study Via Zoom	**20**	**21**
22 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30 RiC Conversation 10 a.m. via Zoom	**23** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes)	**24** Thanksgiving Worship at 7:00 p.m via zoom	**25** Pastor on vacation-----	**26** Thanksgiving Day ----------	**27** ----------	**28** ----------
29 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom ----------	**30** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes) ----------	**IF YOU ARE NOT RECEIVING ZOOM INVITATIONS AND WOULD LIKE TO, PLEASE CONTACT PASTOR JOAN AT oleson@saronlutheran.org.**				